



The Honorable Chaka Fattah  
United States Congress  
1205 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2003

Dear Congressman Fattah:

Good Schools Pennsylvania enthusiastically endorses the "Student Bill of Rights" legislation, which would hold states accountable for providing the fundamentals of educational opportunity to all students.

Like many states, Pennsylvania's reliance on local revenues to finance public education has resulted in wide fluctuation in resources available from community to community. Many districts have enormous tax burdens but still can't raise enough money locally to provide even the most basic education. In particular, poor children in Pennsylvania's urban and rural communities do not receive the quality education they both deserve and need.

For example, today the top-spending school district in Pennsylvania spends an average of \$12,691 per student, while the lowest-spending school district spends only \$4,225. The disparity in actual instructional funds between these two school districts is a shocking \$8,400 per child, or \$211,000 per classroom. According to Education Week's annual report on education (January 2003), Pennsylvania ranks among the four worst states in terms of whether state funds are used to equalize funding across wealthy and poor school districts.

It is unconscionable that -- nearly 50 years after the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* struck down "separate and unequal" schooling -- millions of children still do not have access to the educational resources that are critical to student achievement, including highly qualified teachers, challenging curricula, up-to-date textbooks, school facilities, and others.

Good Schools Pennsylvania formed in 2001 to mobilize parents, students and concerned citizens for comprehensive public education reform, including:

- Adequate and equitable funding of every school district;
- Implementation of programs with proven capacity to boost student achievement
- Commonsense accountability measures to make sure every child succeeds.

-more-

We commend you for your leadership in introducing the Student Bill of Rights. This legislation has enormous potential to take us closer to our vision of a just society, in which all children have equal opportunity to pursue a quality education.

Sincerely,

Nelida Sepulveda  
Executive Director